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Introduction

Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Dorchester County Council and the citizens of Dorchester County Maryland, on the "Lessons Learned from the Recovery Act and New Plans to Strengthen Economic Development".

I would first of all like to voice the county's appreciation for the exemplary performance of the Economic Development Administration (EDA), in their assistance in helping the county spur economic growth and prosperity in the region, as a result of our being awarded the \$3,000,000. grant. Ms. Anne Cavalier, our regional representative, and EDA's supporting staff truly personify EDA's mission which is to "lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, and preparing American regions for growth and success in the world-wide economy, as was stated by Assistant Secretary of Commerce, John R. Fernandez at a previous hearing.

Dorchester County, with its 1,500 miles of shoreline, is one of the largest land/water mass counties in Maryland, encompassing nearly 600 square miles of land and 70 square miles of water. The County has 790 businesses currently employing 9,460 workers, of which approximately 12 of those businesses employ 100 or more workers. Dorchester County, Maryland has traditionally depended upon food processing, light manufacturing, and high-tech assembly to fuel the local economy before recent downsizings, and increased offshore manufacturing trends that caused a major loss of jobs. Even in times of domestic economic boom, Dorchester County has traditionally lagged behind Maryland's economic growth. Presently the County's unemployment rate is 12.1% (DLLR, December 2009).

Between 2007 and the present, Dorchester County with its population of 30,000 has lost nearly 1,000 jobs. With this EDA grant award, the County will now be able to diversify its industry mix to include value added agriculture, innovative aquaculture, and high-tech manufacturing. We also have existing companies that are working on green initiatives and bio-mass projects. The mixture of historical industry sectors and new high tech sectors that encourage innovation, offer a unique opportunity for our County to attract and train a workforce for jobs of the future.

It is estimated the Technology Park will create approximately 545 direct jobs.

"As a local elected official, I can testify first hand that successful economic development is achieved by investing in local economic, human, and physical infrastructure. The recent 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funding (ARRA) awarded to Dorchester County to develop the new technology park will be the catalyst to spur economic growth and prosperity not

only countywide, but also regionally, as the nation begins to recover from the economic downturn.

The use of these funds will serve as a major catalyst for implementing an economic development strategy focused on sustainability, innovation & commercialization, developing a diverse workforce, stakeholder collaboration and career awareness beginning at the elementary school level through high school.

To proactively prepare the youth of our community for jobs of the future, the Dorchester County Council recently approved local funding commitments to build a new Career and Technology Center with an expanded curriculum. This will ensure we “grow our own” industry leaders as well as attract new talent to our County. Additionally, college bound students will have an opportunity to received career training in technology related fields at Chesapeake College, a two year community college located in both Cambridge, Maryland and Wye Mills, Maryland.

With regards to international investment, the County’s “Sister County” relationship with Duren Germany has paved the way for private investment opportunities by international companies.

Federal funding has also provide needed resources to create a fiber optic superhighway with off ramps from the NASA facility on Wallops Island through the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland, and will further increase the potential of the Technology Park’s success. In the past the absence of this critical infrastructure has prevented the region from competing for high-tech economic development projects.

Other important variables that compliment the Technology Park include the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. The park will provide a location for post graduate candidates who desire to start environmental firms in the region, given our close proximity to the Chesapeake Bay.

Also, the expansion of the Cambridge/Dorchester Regional Airport will further accommodate corporate executives who regularly fly into the region to visit local operations. One of the State’s signature conference resorts, the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa and Marina located in Cambridge, Maryland offer opportunities to bring investors and corporate executives to the region, who will discover the County’s business location attributes, and potentially consider locating their business in Dorchester County or the region.

The major lessons learned are without question, the critical importance of stakeholder collaboration with respect to creating seamless partnerships that expedite implementation of a bona-fide action plan.

The administration’s and EDA’s investment strategy geared toward targeting projects with potential to stimulate job creation and promote regional economic development, has the realistic potential to transform our regional economy Developing technology parks, business incubators, and other investments that spur entrepreneurship and innovation while contributing to sustained economic growth, is a wise investment strategy that could yield expeditious returns.

In Conclusion:

Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your time today and for inviting me to speak regarding “Lessons Learned from the Recovery Act and New Plans to Strengthen Economic Development”. I look forward to answering any questions you might have at this time.